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ABSTRACT

This paper explores how exemplary teachers integrate three forms of knowledge in order to help student learn. This triad of knowledge is composed of professional knowledge (subject matter, curricular, and pedagogical knowledge), interpersonal knowledge (relationship with students, the education community and the local community), and intrapersonal knowledge (reflection, ethics, and dispositions). An extensive literature review and research with exemplary elementary, middle, and high school teachers revealed that the teachers' understanding of what it means to be a teacher involves developing and integrating professional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal knowledge in ways that allow them to structure the physical, social, and intellectual environment of their classrooms. These teachers indicated that students need to learn more than subject matter in order to be ready for life beyond the classroom. Also, development of the triad of knowledge is a lifelong process that is easier if habits and dispositions are formed when children are young. A number of ways exemplary teachers help students learn are briefly described. (Contains 29 reference). (ND)

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Becoming an Exemplary Teacher: Integrating Professional, Interpersonal, and Intrapersonal Knowledge

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Becoming an Exemplary Teacher: Integrating

Professional, Interpersonal, and Intrapersonal Knowledge

The era of reform in America sparked by *A nation at risk* (1983) refocused our attention on excellence and on classroom teachers. It also produced a spate of expert-novice studies attempting to understand what expert teachers do. In a major departure from this decade of expert-novice studies, Collinson (1996a) proffered a more comprehensive portrait of what is important to exemplary teachers and illustrated how they envision excellence within and beyond the classroom. This model for becoming an exemplary teacher emphasizes continuous development of a triad of knowledge:

- professional knowledge (subject matter, curricular, and pedagogical knowledge)
- interpersonal knowledge (relationships with students, the educational community, and the local community)
- intrapersonal knowledge (reflection, ethics, and dispositions).

The model is by no means definitive; it reflects the results to date of on-going research with K-12 teachers. This paper elaborates the triad of knowledge and illustrates how exemplary teachers integrate the three forms of knowledge in order to help students learn.

Developing a Triad of Knowledge

There is little doubt that exemplary teachers can be recognized by colleagues (see Collinson, 1994; Ellett, C., Loup, K., Evans, L., & Chauvin, S., 1992; Jackson,

1968/1990). "The myth that we cannot tell an excellent teacher from a mediocre or poor teacher is as pernicious as it is false" (Cross, 1987, p. 501). So the question is, "What makes exemplary teachers recognizable?" The focus of attention in the United States has long been on pedagogical strategies and skills and, more recently, on collaboration. During the last decade, this focus has continued through the professionalization of teaching movement as a way to reform teaching and learning. For example, the Holmes Group has been advocating expert knowledge, expanded teacher roles, and increased collegial interaction (Holmes Group, 1986); university-school collaboration through the establishment of professional development schools (Holmes Group, 1990); and changes in colleges of education for the preparation of teachers (Holmes Group, 1995). But when I listened to exemplary teachers, who all consider themselves professionals, I heard them talk about far more than the vision of the Holmes Group.

Professional knowledge.

As educators sought to put the Holmes Group's vision into practice, Shulman (1986) proposed that expert knowledge for teachers would include subject matter knowledge, curricular knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge. In the triad of knowledge for becoming an exemplary teacher, I refer to this expert knowledge as professional knowledge. There is nothing magical about this form of knowledge; it has long been the mainstay of teachers colleges and is a necessary foundation for good teaching. What it has come to represent, however, particularly through workshops for in-service teachers, is a technical, "how to" version of knowledge

that has lulled us into thinking that teaching is less complex than it is and that professional knowledge is sufficient to produce excellent teachers. In our postmodern world of uncertainty and rapid change, professional knowledge must be continuously updated. However, continuous learning for in-service teachers has been left largely to individual initiative and to periodic professional development activities that too often have unclear expectations, are unrelated, and offer little if any follow-up.

Interpersonal knowledge.

Professional knowledge is a necessary but insufficient part of the triad of knowledge for becoming an exemplary teacher. "The important things that happen in schools result from the interaction of personalities" (Waller, 1965, p. 1). Teaching, perhaps more than any other profession, depends on individual and group interactions with many children and adults. So in addition to exemplary teachers being continuous learners in order to be professionally knowledgeable, they also work at developing high levels of interpersonal knowledge, sometimes referred to as "people skills." However, this form of knowledge is more complex than a simple set of people skills; it involves maturity and wisdom.

Teachers who develop their interpersonal knowledge learn to think in an ever expanding scope of professional community. To do so requires personal and organizational knowledge that allows teachers to understand many different perspectives and facets of issues.

New teachers (and experienced teachers who have never been pushed to

develop their interpersonal knowledge) generally articulate concerns related to their particular classroom or personal preference, and they are sometimes unable or unwilling to systematically think beyond their classroom and consider broader perspectives such as school or community concerns. On the other hand, exemplary teachers, who continuously work at developing their interpersonal knowledge, begin to see increasingly complex issues and perspectives: from the district level to state, national, and global levels (Collinson, 1994). They also recognize that teachers work within political systems (see Sternberg & Horvath, 1995) and they see teachers as one part of a profession that includes many members--administrators, researchers, teacher educators, state department personnel, union leaders--each with different roles and concerns.

Not only do exemplary teachers interact with the educational community, they rely on interpersonal knowledge for successful relationships with students and the local community, particularly with the parents or guardians of their students. Teacher education has not paid attention to this form of knowledge except in a narrow way. "Teachers are trained extensively in how to communicate with children. They receive little or no training and in-service development in how to communicate openly, honestly, and accessibly with parents" (Alexander, as cited in Hargreaves, 1995, p. 19). My observations and research lead me to believe that a lack of interpersonal knowledge can affect not only teacher-parent interactions, but also teacher relationships with adults in general, including colleagues.

Interpersonal knowledge and practice in working with parents and colleagues

may have been overlooked in teacher education because teachers spend most of their time with children and traditionally plan and teach in considerable isolation from other teachers. Moreover, although collaboration with other adults is a hallmark of good teaching, learning, and leadership (e.g., Gardner, 1990; Rosenholtz, 1989; Senge, 1990), interpersonal knowledge is generally limited to administrator preparation instead of permeating teacher education, and it has not been linked to evaluations of teacher performance.

Continuous learning is one of the most obvious attributes of exemplary teachers (see Collinson, 1994). Some exemplary teachers, particularly those who engaged in team teaching or taught within hearing or sight of other adults (usually teachers or parent volunteers) early in their careers, realized quickly that learning from and with other adults expanded and challenged their own perspectives. Regular interactions with adults were also vital to teaching them to give and receive criticism, helping them take risks and form more balanced judgments, and understanding that there are many effective ways to teach and learn (Howey & Collinson, 1995). These experiences had a powerful influence on the development of teachers' interpersonal knowledge.

School systems, as organizations, are paying attention to the benefits of interpersonal knowledge. In this "age of social transformation," Drucker (1994) predicts that knowledge will become the most valued currency of the future and that "knowledge workers" will need to function in teams rather than as individuals. Recently too, a broader definition of leadership (including teachers as leaders) and a

conceptualization of schools as learning organizations have emerged, focusing attention on collaborative relationships among teachers. The Holmes Group has initiated school-university partnerships and many school districts have changed their governance structure to include teams of teachers to make decisions at the school level. These kinds of reforms assume that teachers have developed high levels of interpersonal knowledge necessary for working well with other adults (e.g., open-mindedness, empathy, and honest communication). However, my experience as a teacher and my recent research have led me to believe that unless teachers have had many opportunities to practice interpersonal skills and receive critical feedback, mature behavior and relationships cannot be assumed (Collinson, 1996b).

Intrapersonal knowledge.

A third form of knowledge that appears necessary to exemplary teaching is intrapersonal knowledge. Whereas interpersonal knowledge focuses primarily on human interactions and relationships, intrapersonal knowledge emphasizes understanding of oneself and the capacity for introspection and reflection. Perhaps because intrapersonal knowledge represents individual ways of thinking and ways of being, this form of knowledge appears to be the least studied in the triad of knowledge. Exemplary teachers routinely mention certain dispositions and ethics that are important to them and that have contributed to their quality of life: In addition to having a disposition toward continuous learning, they are reflective, have a well developed ethic of care, and a strong work ethic. These dispositions and ethics are like Aristotle's conception of virtues or character--that is, "the attitudes,

sensibilities, and beliefs that affect how a person sees, acts, and indeed lives" (Sherman, 1989, p. 1).

Since teaching depends to a large degree on how a person sees, acts, and lives (teaching by modeling), one could argue that the development of dispositions and ethics is very important in teacher education. It is, however, such a neglected part of teacher education as to be almost nonexistent. Table 1 (Collinson, 1996a, p. 17) summarizes the intrapersonal knowledge that exemplary teachers consistently mention as very important in their lives and as virtues they try to teach, both explicitly and/or by modeling.

TABLE 1 Ethics and Dispositions: Teaching for Life Beyond the Classroom

Ethics	*Dispositions*
An ethic of care	A disposition toward continuous learning
Caring/compassion	Curiosity/creativity
Respect for self and others	Risk taking
Understanding self and others	Problem finding and solving
Giving to and receiving from others	Responsibility
Courage	Flexibility
A work ethic	
Work ethic/pride of effort	
Dedication/perseverance	
Doing one's best	

My on-going data collection indicates that exemplary teachers have also developed a disposition of thinking toward the future and a disposition toward

optimism. These dispositions, along with the disposition toward continuous learning, appear to be pivotal in a very important aspect of exemplary teachers' intrapersonal knowledge: their capacity for habitual and deliberate reflection.

Since Dewey (1933/1960) first elaborated his thinking about the reflective or inquiry process, much has been written about reflection and many different definitions have emerged. I have found the following description most useful:

1. Recognition/definition of a problem or question
2. Proposal of one or more hypotheses
3. Inquiry (gathering of pertinent information)
4. Reasoning (e.g., analysis of information and predicting potential consequences of actions or inaction)
5. Decision making to resolve the problem or respond to the question
6. Evaluation of whether and how the process could have been improved

(Collinson, 1996a).

Whether this process is used for on-the-spot decision making in the classroom or at a more leisurely pace for investigating action research questions, its outcomes are shaped by the teacher's dispositions: curiosity to ask questions and pursue inquiry; skill and maturity in defining the precise problem or question(s); capacity to think toward the future in order to imagine courses of action and their likely consequences; responsibility for one's decisions; willingness to risk admitting error or misjudgment via the evaluative process; intellectual flexibility to think about issues from many perspectives and live with ambiguity and uncertainty; and

optimism to believe that changing or altering teaching practices can improve learning for students.

Integrating the Triad of Knowledge

Despite teachers colleges' emphasis on professional knowledge and their lack of emphasis on interpersonal and intrapersonal knowledge, there is overlap among the three forms of knowledge. For example, Hunt (1971) and his associates recognized an interpersonal component in their depiction of high levels of cognitive development: "In interpersonal terms, the higher conceptual levels are associated with greater self-understanding and empathic awareness of others . . . creativity [and] flexibility" (p. 18), lower stereotypy, greater capacity to deal with complexity and ambiguity, and "exploration behavior" (p. 18) (also see Hunt, Butler, Noy, & Rosser, 1978). Exploration behavior can be associated with curiosity, risk taking, and problem finding and solving. These are the same attributes teachers mentioned when referring to an ethic of care and a disposition toward continuous learning--or what I refer to as intrapersonal knowledge. The links among the triad of knowledge have also been noted as resulting in "good habits of thinking" (Dewey, 1933/1960), maturity (Heath, 1994), capacity to reason and make judgments (Jackson, 1987), and wisdom (e.g., Arlin, 1993).

Leithwood (1990) and Reiman and Thies-Sprinthall (forthcoming) synthesized research on human development and described teachers at the highest levels of professional expertise and psychological development as reflective; capable of understanding the assumptions, beliefs, and values behind choices and decisions;

appreciative of multiple possibilities, multiple perspectives, and the interdependency of relationships; capable of synthesis of perspectives and of balancing the emphasis given to students' intellectual achievements and interpersonal learning in the classroom; adept at using discipline effectively and controlling the classroom in collaboration with their students; and skilful at encouraging complex functioning, learning, creativity, and flexibility to create intellectual, interactive classroom cultures.

Like the authors above, my research with exemplary elementary, middle, and high school teachers indicates that their understanding of what it means to be a teacher involves developing and integrating professional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal knowledge in ways that allow them to structure the physical, social, and intellectual environment of their classrooms. These teachers understand that students need to learn more than subject matter in order to be ready for life beyond the classroom. The teachers also understand that development of the triad of knowledge is a lifelong process that is easier if habits and dispositions are formed when children are young.

To help students learn, these exemplary teachers:

- capitalize on their understanding of children's development to create an attractive, inviting environment for learners
- work hard to know students' interests, hobbies, backgrounds, and families. They tend to use this information to pique students' curiosity, help students link school to real life experiences, understand students' ways of thinking, and encourage

tolerance of multiple perspectives within the classroom.

• contact students' parents/guardians regularly and solicit them as children's long-term teachers. They seek opportunities to find students' strengths, show children's work, praise students' progress, and explain the curriculum. They ask parents to help change inappropriate student behaviors, communicate frequently, and share their talents with the school. Their goal is to have parent and teacher working toward the same goals for each child.

• guide students through the reflective process to resolve disputes with their schoolmates

• give appropriate choices to students, but assist children in thinking through possible consequences of their choices and accepting responsibility for decisions

• establish dialogical patterns that involve plenty of opportunities for children to both listen and speak to each other in the classroom

• listen to and learn about students' thought processes and depth of understanding

• use a variety of open-ended, applied projects so children can practice the reflective process, link subject matter to real life situations, and think of creative products to demonstrate their learning

• value and encourage questions from students

• provide opportunities for children to teach as well as learn (e.g., students designing math questions for each other) while pointing out and modeling that teachers (and other adults) are learners too

• seize occasions to help children think through questions and problems of a social

or intellectual nature

• model behaviors that help people get along: listening without interrupting, seeking help and advice from others, admitting mistakes, being honest, etc.

• spend time and energy to bring current events and community resources into the classroom to broaden the perspectives of their students

• seek multiple methods of assessment that more accurately reflect their students' conceptual understanding

• create opportunities for students to critique their own and others' work

• challenge themselves and their students to find better and more interesting ways to think and learn

• recognize that there is always more to learn and develop.

Conclusion

Most exemplary teachers, I believe, have been integrating the triad of knowledge for many years. And when I think back to some of the extraordinary teachers I had as a student, it is the relationships and habits of thinking that provide me with the most powerful memories from their classes and extracurricular activities--not merely their subject matter expertise. But not everyone has enjoyed having exemplary teachers in their K-12 experience; not every student teacher has been paired with exemplary teachers in their preservice teaching experience; and not all in-service teachers have enjoyed working with exemplary teachers throughout their careers.

We can learn from the students who taught me that they could not do

"better" work until they saw and understood what "better" looked like. If this premise also applies to teachers, we can assume that although the majority of teachers work hard and do their best for students, they may not know how to "do better" and they may have quite different understandings of what "exemplary" means if they have never seen exemplary teachers or had opportunities to work with them. Good teaching has become almost synonymous with methods classes for preservice teachers and "how to" workshops for in-service teachers. More than a decade has elapsed since Heath (1986) called for "developing teachers, not just techniques." Yet the new standards for beginning teachers continue to emphasize professional knowledge, although there are a few references to interpersonal and intrapersonal knowledge.

I suggest that we ask ourselves what we emphasize as teacher educators. Do we model the triad of knowledge and provide opportunities for teachers to practice these forms of knowledge in our university classes? Do we design dialogical patterns and open-ended assignments that allow broad application of knowledge? Are our classes set up so that teachers regularly practice the reflective process? Do we make sure that preservice and novice teachers observe and work with exemplary teachers? Do professional development opportunities and personal improvement plans for teachers include development of the triad of knowledge? Are interpersonal skills with students, parents, and colleagues considered in teachers' job performance reviews?

Teaching, as it has been described by exemplary teachers, is a holistic and

complex web that reflects their ways of thinking and ways of being. How and why they make decisions is closely linked to the beliefs, assumptions, and dispositions they presently hold. These teachers see themselves learners, continuously developing and changing as their knowledge changes. If becoming an exemplary teacher is a developmental process and career-long journey, if increasing the number of exemplary teachers is a desirable goal, and if development of the triad of knowledge is a means to this goal, then teacher educators and policymakers have a responsibility to find ways to help more teachers become exemplary.

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